

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 081202Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2477

S E C R E T BANGKOK 5947

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, XC, US

SUBJECT: SUGGESTED POLICY ACTIONS FOR THAILAND

REF: A. BANGKOK 5736; B. BANGKOK 5946

1. WE ARE SEPARATELY ANALYZING THAILAND'S REACTION TO RECENT EVENTS IN INDOCHINA (REFTEL B). THUS FAR, THAI OPINION LEADERS ARE IN A STATE OF FLUX, PULLED IN SEVERAL DIRECTIONS--TOWARD IMMEDIATE ACCOMMODATION WITH HANOI, TOWARD CONTINUED CLOSE ALIGNMENT WITH THE U.S., OR SOMETHING IN BETWEEN. WE BELIEVE THERE ARE WAYS WE CAN INFLUENCE THAILAND'S FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE AND KEEP OUR OPTIONS OPEN SO THAT WE CAN RETAIN A POSITION OF INFLUENCE IN THAILAND. WE CAN ALSO STRENGTHEN THAILAND'S HAND AS IT AT SOME POINT ENTERS INTO FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH HANOI AND PEKING. THESE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE PREDICATED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THAILAND IS THE PRINCIPAL COUNTRY THROUGH WHICH THE U.S. CAN AND WILL WANT TO BOLSTER WHATEVER POSITION AND INFLUENCE WE DESIRE TO RETAIN ON MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA OVER THE LONGER TERM.

2. AT STAKE IMMEDIATELY IS OUR CREDIBILITY. DURING THE PARIS PEACE TALKS U.S. OFFICIALS TOLD TOP LEVELS OF THE RTG THAT WE HAD THE MEANS AND WOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO MAKE THE AGREEMENTS WORK; THAT WE WOULD PREVENT A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER OF SOUTH VIETNAM BY FORCE. HANOI'S RECENT BLATANT VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENTS HAS CALLED THESE ASSURANCES INTO QUESTION. THOUGH THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAS CHANGED, THE PRESENT

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FOREIGN MINISTER, CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN, SAT IN ON THESE MEETINGS AS

DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, AND OF COURSE SENIOR THAI MILITARY LEADERS WERE TOLD EXACTLY WHAT WE HAD SAID.

3. THERE IS NO EASY FIX TO THIS SITUATION, BUT WE BELIEVE THERE ARE STEPS WE CAN AND SHOULD TAKE TO SHORE UP OUR POSITION HERE AND DISCOURAGE FROM OVER-REACTING THOSE THAI WHO ARE ALREADY DEEPLY CONCERNED BY THEIR OWN ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN THE AREA AND BY COMMENTS OF FORMER STRONG SUPPORTERS OF THE U.S. POSITION IN SEA SUCH AS LEE KUAN YEW.

4. THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WOULD HAVE IMMEDIATE IMPACT:

A. ALL POSSIBLE MOVES TO HELP THE GVN WITHSTAND A POSSIBLE NORTH VIETNAMESE ATTACK ON SAIGON. FOR THE THAI, ACTIONS WILL SPEAK FAR LOUDER THAN WORDS.

B. EVERY EFFORT (AS WE ARE NOW DOING) TO HELP GET OUT OF CAMBODIA THOSE KHMER WHO HAVE WORKED CLOSELY WITH US AND WHO WISH TO LEAVE.

C. INCLUSION IN THE PRESIDENT'S FORTHCOMING ADDRESS TO CONGRESS SOME REINFORCEMENT OF HIS APRIL 3 TELEVISION ASSURANCES AT PALM SPRINGS THAT THE U.S. STANDS BY ITS DEFENSE ALLIANCE WITH THAILAND. (WE SHOULD NOT, OF COURSE, RAISE UNREALISTIC HOPES).

D. AUTHORIZATION FOR ME, AFTER OUR EVALUATIONS ARE COMPLETED, TO SHARE WITH KEY THAI LEADERS, AS ALLIES, OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE INDOCHINA SITUATION.

E. AUTHORIZATION FOR ME TO REINFORCE WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAYS PUBLICLY BY PROVIDING PRIVATE ASSURANCES FROM THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE USG OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT AND HELP THAILAND TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT CONGRESS WILL ALLOW.

F. THE FINDING OF ADDITIONAL WAYS TO HELP OUR REAL FRIENDS HERE. TWO POSSIBILITIES WHICH COME TO MIND ARE TO (1) SHIFT TO THAILAND MILITARY EQUIPMENT (INCLUDING SPARES) IN VIETNAM WHICH MAY NOT BE SERVICEABLE OR REQUIRED BUT WHICH COULD BE REHABILITATED
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IN THAILAND; AND (2) DIVERT ANY REMAINING MILITARY HARDWARE AND AMMUNITION IN THE PIPELINE FOR CAMBODIA TO THAILAND SHOULD CAMBODIA NO LONGER BECOME THEIR DESTINATION. IF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE NOT FEASIBLE, EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO FIND OTHER WAYS TO HELP THE THAI MILITARY.

5. THE RECOMMENDATION IN THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING PARAGRAPH IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT. THAILAND SEES ITS

SECURITY SITUATION SERIOUSLY WORSENING. IT WILL BE LOOKING FOR
INCREASED HELP FOR BOTH THE DOLLAR VALUE OF THE ASSISTANCE AND
FOR THE U.S. CONCERN IT IMPLIES. SUCH AID WILL BE MOST
IMPORTANT TO BOLSTER OUR POSITION WITH THE THAI MILITARY WHO
HAVE BEEN AND ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN THE STAUCHEST DEFENDERS
OF OUR INTERESTS HERE. AND THIS AID MUST BE TIMELY IF IT IS TO
SERVE OUR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES.
MASTERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, FOREIGN RELATIONS, MILITARY ASSISTANCE, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BANGKO05947
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750121-0634
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750473/aaaacopp.tel
Line Count: 123
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 BANGKOK 5736, 75 BANGKOK 5946
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <20 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SUGGESTED POLICY ACTIONS FOR THAILAND
TAGS: PFOR, TH, XC, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006